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AUTHOR Phillips, George O., Sr.
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ABSTRACT

Certain study habits and attitudes of 102 disadvantaged college students were investigated. The students were assigned to one of four groups, and each group, except the control group which received no instruction, was taught reading by either the teacher-guidance, the individualized, or the audiovisual instructional approach. The course content was the same for all groups. Various pretreatment and post-treatment data were obtained. However, only the results of the Brown-Holtzman SSHA, Form C, mean gains are reported in this paper. A total study orientation score and four basic scale scores were obtained. Statistically significant pretest and post-test differences were found for (1) gains in all basic scale and total scores for the individualized approach group, (2) losses in basic scale and total scores for the audiovisual approach group, (3) gains in delay avoidance and work methods and losses for teacher approval and education acceptance scores for both the control and the teacher-guidance approach groups, and (4) gain in total score for the control group and loss in total score for the teacher-guidance approach group. The individualized approach produced more favorable responses for study habits and study attitudes. References are included. (CM)

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Dr. George O. Phillips, Sr.
Director, The Reading Center
North Carolina Central Univ.
Durham, North Carolina 27707

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Performance of Disadvantaged College Students on the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes

by

George C. Phillips, Sr.

RE002 808

It is not unusual to read in the literature that many reading programs evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional methods or approaches by the sole criterion of reading achievement. It is such practice, no doubt, that prompted Huser (4) to make the following comment in answer to the question, "What methods are most effective?" Huser wrote:

> If one considers only reading achievement, what happens to attitudes? It has long been accepted by educators that the more favorable attitude a student has toward

> a subject, the greater his interest; hence, his motivation is higher. Ultimately, the positive attitude will lead toward a condition of greater maturation and growth in that subject. Consequently, if a child likes to read better when taught by one method of reading in preference to another, achievement remaining constant, should not the child be taught by that method reading? (4:378).

Huser's comment offers a challenge for grade school teachers to whom it is addressed. It also deserves the attention of reading teachers beyond the grades and, in a special sense, that of teachers whose responsibility includes instruction in reading and study for disadvantaged college students.

Before going on, I shall give definitions for two terms in my topic. The terms are "study habits" and "attitudes". According to Preston and Botel (7), "A study habit is a routine that you follow regularly. Keeping up-to-date in reading assignments, studying at the same time and place every day, and studying by yourself are study habits." (7:1). Brown and Holtzman (1) have included two components in their Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA) which they refer to as "study habits." These components are "Delay Avoidance," and "Work Methods. More will be said about them later.

The second term to be defined is "attitude." Several

definitions of attitude are in the psychological literature. I shall cite two of them. Thurstone (9) wrote that attitude is the degree of positive or negative affect associated with some psychological object. However, in preference to the one just stated, I like the following definition by McKillop (5) because it touches so many concepts that reading people are fond of. She defined attitude as a more or less stable tendency to respond in a favorable or unfavorable way to any topic, institution, practice, or person. Attitude thus, includes "set" (a temporary attitude, a momentary state of readiness) and affective factors (value judgements rather than pleasantness or unpleasantness)." (5:3). From this broad view of attitudes, Brown and Holtzman (1) identified two components and included them in their survey. These they refer to as "Teacher Approval" and "Education Acceptance" or, together, as "Study Attitudes."

Investigations into the relationship between study habits and attitudes and reading are increasing. Some of these investigations have been concerned with the effect of attitudes upon different facets of reading. For example, Groff (3) investigated the influence of attitude upon comprehension of content-type reading material, and Piekarz (6) studied its influence upon the perceptual and conceptual abilities of the reader. In like manner, several investigations have been con-

cerned with the effect of reading instruction upon attitudes. For example, Cuyler (2) reported a study in which the SSHA was administered to freshmen before and after a course in reading. He found no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post- instruction study habits and attitudes of the total group or between males and females, but there was a statistically significant difference in the gains made by individual classes of the group. It would be interesting to find out if the gains realized in the individual classes were related to the personalities of the individual instructors. Schubert (8) also paired retarded college r readers with students of unselected reading abilities to determine if the retarded readers were characterized by study habits and attitudes that were detrimental to progress in reading. Analysis of scores from the SSHA which he administered as a criterion measure revealed that reading retardation may be attributable to certain personality traits, attitudes, and study habits.

Going from this bit of background, I shall tell you about some results which I obtained as part of a study involving the study habits and attitudes of disadvantaged college freshmen. The study was undertaken not only to replicate certain elements of previous research into the relationship between the SSHA and reading achievement, but also to determine if the study habits and attitudes of disadvantaged college students are influenced by different methods or approaches to teaching

the same reading and study skills. One-hundred-and-two students in their second semester - 56 females and 46 males - were the subjects of t he study. Originally assembled as four classes, each class was chosen by random selection to receive a different treatment as one of four groups, namely: 1. Teacher-Guided Group, 2. an Individualized Group, 3. an Audio-Visual Group, and 4. a Control Group. Each group, except the Control Group which received no instruction, was taught by a different instructional approach. However, the content of the course was the same for all of the groups. Before and after the instructional treatments, the students were tested with the Davis Reading Test, Form IA and IB; the Brown-Holtzman SSHA, Form C, and the Peifer Reading Attitude Inventory, Advanced. Beginning and end of semester GPA were also obtained and used as one of the predictor and criterion variables. Pretest and post-test scores for all of the variables were analyzed by the analysis of covariance procedure. The F test was used to determine the significance of differences among the means for the control and the three instructional groups. Results reported here are concerned only with how the control group and the three groups that were taught by different approaches performed on the SSHA.

The SSHA gives four "basic scale" scores which when added together yield a "total" or Study Orientation score.

Characteristics which the "basic scales" measure are "Delay Avoidance" or promptness in completing academic assignments, lack of procrastination, and freedom from wasteful delay and distraction; "Work Methods" or use of effective study procedures, efficiency in doing academic assignments, and how-to-study skills; "Teacher Approval" or expressed opinon about teachers and their classroom practices; and "Education Acceptance" or approval of educational objectives, practices and requirements. (1:9)

Among the results which were obtained from the study are the following: With respect to the "Delay "Avoidance" measure, there were gains between the pretest and post-test means for the Control Group which received no instruction and for the groups taught reading and study skills by the Teacher-Guided Approach or the Individualized Approach. A loss between pretest and post-test means resulted for the group taught the same skills by the Audio-Visual Approach. The differences among the performances for the four groups was statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence.

With respect to the "Work Methods" measure, there were gains between the pretest and post-test means for the Control Group, and for the groups taught reading and study skills by the Teacher-Guided Approach or by the Individualized Approach.

With respect to the "Teacher Approval" measure, only the group taught by the Individualized Approach showed a gain between the pretest and post-test mean scores. The Control Group and the groups taught by the Teacher-Guided Approach or the Audio-Visual Approach lost ground. Although positive, the differences among the performances for the four groups was not statistically significant.

With respect to the "Education Acceptance" measure, only the group taught by the Individualized Approach showed a gain between the pretest and posttest means. Losses resulted for the Control Group and for the groups taught by the Teacher-Guided Approach or by the Audio-Visual Approach. The differences among the performances for the four groups was statistically significant at the .01 level of confidence.

With respect to the "Study Orientation" or total score for the SSHA, the Control Group and the group taught by the Individualized Approach showed mean gains from pretest to posttest. The larger gain, however, was made by the group taught by the Individualized Approach. The differences among the performances for the groups for the "total" score were statistically significant beyond the .01 level of confidence. Results from the study indicate the following:

1. Gains between pretest and posttest mean "basic scale" and "total" SSHA scores for the group taught by the Individualized Approach.

2. Losses between pretest and posttest mean "basic scales" and "total"scores for the group taught by the Audio-Visual Approach.
3. Gains between pretest and posttest means "Delay Avoidance" and "Work Methods" scores, and losses between pretest and posttest mean "Teacher Approval" and "Education Acceptance" scores for the Control Group and for the group taught by the Teacher-Guided Approach.
4. A gain between pretest and posttest mean "total" score for the Control Group and a loss between pretest and posttest mean "total" score for the group taught by the Teacher-Guided Approach.

On the basis of the foregoing results, it appears that the Individualized Approach was most effective in bringing about a greater degree of favorable responses for study habits and study attitudes. While other factors might have influenced these results, it appears that an approach to reading and study skills instruction that provides for individual guidance and counseling, free choice of instructional materials, minimum authoritarianism in the learning situation, regular evaluation on a one-to-one relationship, and the challenge of individual responsibility for improvement were important motivators for the type of student involved in the study.

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